



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**Testimony Before the State House Education Committee in Support of
House Bill 5196**

Submitted by

**Fran Talsma
Director, Pioneering Healthier Communities
State Alliance of Michigan YMCAs
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The Michigan YMCAs support House Bill 5196 to strengthen physical education and activity for Michigan children grades kindergarten through eighth.

Michigan is in the midst of an obesity crisis. It is estimated that approximately one in four of Michigan's adolescents are overweight or obese, and almost 80% of these youths will go on to be overweight as adults.¹ Trust for America's Health projects that without major changes, 60% of Michigan's entire adult population will be overweight or obese by the year 2030.²

For generations Michigan YMCAs have partnered with schools throughout the state to provide accessible safe opportunities for physical activity. In response to Michigan's Health and Wellness 4X4, several of our Ys are piloting evidence based shared use models to provide physical activity and nutrition education to schoolchildren in some of our most vulnerable communities. The Y is committed to improving the health of Michigan children, and is eager to work with Michigan schools to meet the needs of our children.

Strengthening physical education requirements in schools is an important step in reversing this trend. Preliminary findings from the National Bureau of Economic Research show that physical education classes reduce the probability of obesity among children, and therefore must be a top priority in our schools.³ Physical activity also has a demonstrated effect on school performance. Again and again, studies have illustrated this positive association between exercise and academic achievement.⁴

The proposed legislation will strengthen physical education and increase opportunities for students to become fit, healthy, and productive adults later in life. Governor Snyder recognizes this connection and even stated in a special message on health and wellness that "To combat the problem of childhood obesity...the Michigan Department of Education [needs] to work with schools to facilitate participation in physical activity and health education throughout all grade levels."⁵

In order for our students to take personal responsibility for their health and fully utilize wellness programs in the future, they must develop lifelong health habits such as those taught in physical education in school. Education that directly addresses physical fitness provides students with the necessary tools to take personal responsibility for their physical health and remain active and healthy along the lifespan.

In sum, strong physical education and embedded opportunities for activity sets regular physical activity as the status quo. The Michigan YMCAs urge you to support HB 5196 to improve physical education for our youngest students, helping them build the personal health habits to meet the increased challenges and barriers to a healthy and productive future.

Fran Talsma, MSW
Project Director
Pioneering Healthier Communities
State Alliance of Michigan-YMCA
(734) 646-3412

Sources:

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